Minutes from COAH Leaders Meeting
April 25, 2018
10:30am, Dean’s Conference Room

In attendance: Pauline Gagnon, Elizabeth Kramer, Clint Samples, Shelly Elman, Steve Goodson, Kevin Hibbard, Bob Lane, Meg Pearson, Kevin Shunn, Jeff Zamostny.

1. Minutes of the April 11 meeting were approved.

2. The Associate Deans provided the following updates.

   • Clint requested that everyone submit their department’s AY18-19 Dean Signature Series events to him no later than May 8.

   • Clint asked everyone to email their student and faculty success stories to him (cc’ing Pauline) instead of sending them directly to Julie Lineback or submitting them through the UCM portal. He will then submit them to UCM in a way that guarantees that they won’t get lost.

   • Elizabeth reminded us to update the enrollment figures on our summer spreadsheets by May 2 and provided a copy of the timeline we should follow in keeping tabs on summer classes.

   • Elizabeth let us know that the Associate Deans group is discussing certificates, including how relevant records are kept and reported to the Registrar so that they can be recorded on student transcripts. (COAH offers three certificates—DSW, Publishing and Editing, and Public History—all of which are embedded, meaning that they can’t be earned apart from a degree. She will keep us all informed about the progress they make on this issue.

3. We discussed accessibility issues. Pauline informed us that at a recent meeting Jane Simpson described the coming accessibility policy as an “agreement” rather than a “mandate.” The Associate Deans of the various colleges will discuss the issue to ensure that there is consistency across colleges. The top priority in the near term is to make all syllabi accessible no matter where they are online. The Online Learning Subcommittee is on top of this issue; Pauline will meet with them next week to create a timeline for COAH (perhaps 18 months) and to discussion the logistics of making ABBYY FineReader available, etc. Chairs will have an opportunity to give feedback on that timeline. The Online Learning Subcommittee probably won’t begin official work until fall. There is some talk of establishing an intra-net that would be used by only some constituencies on campus, and accessibility issues may be different for documents posted therein. Shelly mentioned that images containing text pose a problem for accessibility and that how we format the headings of online documents is also important. Jeff asked what this discussion implies about the printed syllabi we give students in face-to-face classes; Pauline indicated that they should be dealt with in the same way as other printed material, via the usual accommodations process.

4. The Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) has noted that the Department of English and Philosophy has a single representative on that committee as well as on the Executive Committee, and they have recommended that there be separate representation for English and Philosophy on both committees, for two reasons: 1. Currently FAC has only six members and they’d like an odd number to break ties. 2. Philosophy has its own representation on some other COAH committees (e.g., P&T, Graduate Studies), and so there is now an inconsistency in how Philosophy is represented. Bob will check with the philosophy faculty to see whether the proposed change would over-burden them; he will report back to Pauline.
5. Pauline asked that we examine the “Kudos” items that she has collected for each of our departments and that we let her know if she’s missing anything, so that she doesn’t omit items when she announces them at next week’s COAH faculty meeting.

6. With regard to faculty searches and offers... When a department is ready to make an offer, the chair should contact Pauline first so that she can double-check critical hire form. Both English and Art were able to hire at the Associate Professor level this year, which helped to widen their respective hiring pools. When this happens, the critical hire form must indicate that the individual is being hired as an Associate Professor. Kevin H. suggested that one downside of hiring at the Associate level is that the new faculty member will be eligible for only one raise associated with a promotion.

7. This year’s Innovations in Pedagogy Conference will have a workshop on the new electronic dossier system. Chairs should encourage those going up for P&T, PTR, or 3YR during the next academic year to attend. Those who use the e-dossier system should transfer their contents to a Google doc for offsite access, so that they will still have access to it in case they leave UWG.

8. Pauline updated us on the AY19 budget. COAH was granted most of the positions we requested, in Music, Art, and Theatre. Money that came from now-eliminated course fees in those three departments will be replaced. There will be no merit pay increase; funds that would have been used for that purpose will be used to shore up TRS. Some USG institutions are coming up with their own money for merit increases, but UWG is not one of them. Faculty who are being promoted will get raises, but there will be no other equity adjustments. According to Shelly, who serves on the Senate Budget Committee, that group is emphasizing a continued focus on improving enrollment and recruitment; UWG is not experiencing increased enrollments like in recent years, and this could hurt our state funding. Kevin H. pointed out that increased funds for operating expenses that were included in new line requests weren’t funded even though the lines were approved; Pauline noted that funds for operating expenses are eventually excluded from the dollar amounts associated with requests for new lines. Kevin H. also noted that some eliminated course fees for music classes are still on the schedule of classes. Kevin S. brought up another problem with course fees: when Art’s previous course fees were eliminated, they weren’t given adequate opportunity to submit revised and corrected fees that applied only to course materials; what’s more, he never received a list of courses that lost their fees. These problems suggest that there should be a better process in place, including a feedback loop, for the elimination and replacement of course fees. We discussed the possibility of the Faculty Senate coming up with an improved process. Shelly, who is on the Senate Budget committee, can bring this up with that committee in the fall.

9. We discussed the Engage West roll-out for COAH. Several measures are down from last year, including measures for Pay and Professional Development, and Pauline asked for feedback.

- Shelly suggested that changing to a 12-month pay schedule for 10-month faculty would help. We noted that various administrators have been signaling for years that a change to a 12-month pay schedule would happen “within 18 months.”

- We discussed whether Pauline needs to change her process for helping to fund faculty travel. Meg noted that faculty who need more travel funds than they already receive are a small but vocal minority who do a lot of work. Shelly suggested that knowledge of the future loss of e-tuition might have led to a perception that professional development funds will diminish, thus driving down results on this measure. Pauline will continue her COAH “pie” approach, and chairs should let faculty know that COAH might be able to provide extra funds (especially for special travel, e.g., presentation of keynotes or travel to receive awards). Pauline might also be able to increase
the amount paid for faculty awards, but adding to individuals’ salaries in non-merit years might not be permitted by HR. We talked about increasing the number of applications for faculty awards; FAC is open to moving the call for applications to fall if that might help.

- Pauline expressed concern with the overall trend of lower scores across the Engagement survey. Some chairs said that their faculties weren’t seeing any results from doing previous surveys and that has dampened enthusiasm for the process.

- The measure “The right information goes to the right person” is a chronic problem. Some staff don’t get informed about changes regarding academic matters, even though those changes affect them; to help avoid this issue, Pauline will now err on the side of over-informing staff. Jeff noted that staff sometimes received information that impacts faculty before the faculty do (e.g., low-cost/no-cost policies went out to staff before they were communicated to faculty). Meg suggested that part of the problem with the low score on this measure might be that not everyone understands that there is some information that cannot be disseminated to everyone (either because of legal restrictions or requirements of professionalism). Kevin S. noted that we need to better understand what kinds of communication are really important, including the idea that email isn’t always the best way to communicate.

- Shelly and Kevin S. indicated that their respective Engagement Survey reports were confusing, with some numbers up and others down in ways that seem contradictory. We talked about possible confusions arising out of the distinction between immediate supervisors and department leaders.

- Please send department roll-out info to Pauline no later than Monday April 30.

- Unlike in previous years, chairs will have to cut-and-paste their own roll-out data into a Qualtrics form by May 15. Some chairs expressed concerns about this process and timeline.

10. Scorecards are due June 1. LDI is May 18.

11. Pauline updated us about topics for future chairs meetings and asked for suggestions for further topics to be covered in those meetings. Shelly indicated that some of her students are having financial problems and asked whether we could talk about creating an emergency fund for students. Elizabeth mentioned that she has had luck getting money for students from other offices on campus, especially if a student is close to graduating. Enrollment Services has funds to cover gaps in tuition to ensure that a student can be enrolled. Pauline said that we should invite someone (yet to be determined) to meet with us about what funds are available on campus to help students in need; if we find that they’re insufficient, we can talk about setting aside some of our Foundation funds for student aid.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Lane